S.H.A.R.E. ACTIVITY Sherry Haydel

Since I am unable to complete this activity with the teacher that I am currently co-teaching with (medical leave), I chose to complete it with the teacher that I will be co-teaching with next year (Karen Wishner). We thought it was a good idea to lay the groundwork prior to next year in the hopes that we can establish a collaborative relationship early.

Question #1 – Hopes regarding the co-teaching relationship:

We both agreed that we would like to try being in the same classroom. I shared my concerns about being able to cover the Reading Intervention curriculum while still being the Special Education teacher in the classroom. I worry about how I can do this and still support the regular Language Arts curriculum that she will be teaching. Karen’s main concern is what the schedule will look like and how we would set up the classroom for both teachers.

Question #2 – Attitudes regarding teaching children with learning disabilities:

We both came to the conclusion that what we teach has to be just as rigorous as that of their non-disabled peers with the understanding that we have to teach differently to meet their individual needs. We both agreed that these students can and will learn. Where we differ is that she made the statement that while these students have “modifications”, Karen feels as though some of the students “take advantage” of the opportunities. We both agreed that the direction that we will proceed is that the IEP/modifications will be given as needed (it’s the law) but throughout the year we will build the supports that the students need in order to no longer need the modifications.

Question #3 & 4 – Responsibilities in the co-taught classroom:

Although our responses were entirely different, it turned out to be a complete division of responsibilities. Karen’s reply was that she would be responsible for organizing the year-long plan so that I could fit in my TRI curriculum appropriately and she would be responsible for maintaining the pace with input from me. We agreed that I should be responsible for establishing the classroom discipline, classroom organization, part of the instruction, ensuring Special Education compliance, and sharing in the grading. I also shared that I would want her to use her expertise in using technology in the classroom as she is a technology guru and I am a babe in the woods.

Question #5a: Classroom Expectations

Karen and I both have the same expectations regarding discipline – we both believe in firm and consistent discipline. Students should know our expectations and we should both be consistent in those expectations. We both believe that students should be in their seats working from bell-to-bell unless the lesson requires otherwise. Neither of us likes a loud or rowdy classroom. While Karen thought that students should be on-task at a pace that meets their learning needs, I answered the question that special education students may need shorter assignments. I tend to grade what is completed when an honest effort is made rather than waiting for a completed assignment (this meets the modified assignment accommodation). When we discussed this, we both agreed with my idea but we are both in agreement that we are working towards being able to complete the entire assignment since this will be the expectation in high school.

We both believe that homework should be short, sweet, and practice for what was done in class both short-term and long-term. Karen and I both agree that I am the organized one of this duo. While she struggles more with a neat and organized environment, it has always worked for her. She understands that disorganization causes stress for me so she is perfectly ok with me being in charge of organizing our classroom environment.

Since Karen and I have worked together in the Language Arts department for the past five years, we have a very good working relationship. We both agree that we both are able to give and receive constructive criticism. We both respect each other and are more than just professional with each other.

I think the only area that we differ is when it came to the question about expectations about the work that our student will do. Karen believes that she doesn’t know enough about teaching students that are performing significantly below grade level. She tends to want to find materials that were developed more for elementary school students and to find materials that are basically copied worksheets. I prefer to find more age-appropriate reading materials and to develop my own classroom assessment materials. We agreed that that we while we plan together it would be my responsibility to make sure the materials that we use would be appropriate for our students..

Karen and I both thought that this was a fabulous activity. The questions facilitated better communication between the two of us because we had to talk about specific topics rather than assume that we knew the answer to the questions. I personally loved the activity and plan to share it with the other teachers in the building that will also be in a co-teaching relationship next year.